

thINKingDANCE

Upping the ante on dance coverage and conversation



Photo: Jonathan Stein

SoLow Fest: So-Low to So-High on the Ben Franklin Bridge

by Jonathan Stein

[SoLow Fest](#) is a do-it-yourself festival in June that focuses on “solo performance that is low-maintenance and low-stress.” Now in its seventh year, it has become an opportunity for independent and emerging theatre, music, and dance artists to present work in varying stages of development, from half-baked to fully produced. In the spirit of low-maintenance, many performances take place outside or in artists’ homes, and all claim a pay-what-you-can ticketing policy.

For two hours on a summer evening that went from shivering thunderstorm rain to eye-blinding, panoramic sun-set, the So-Low Festival had its So-High moment across the span of the Benjamin Franklin Bridge. A stalwart Mira Treatman, motivated in part by a fear of heights, led a half-dozen curious across the bridge’s pedestrian walkway to Camden and back to Philadelphia in her *Bridge to Somewhere*.

This aerial suspended walk was a reprieve from thoughts of millions on the brink of losing health insurance and the daily madness of Trump. The Suicide Prevention Lifeline signs on the bridge (“There is hope. Make the call.”) cautioned not to take this aerial escapism too far.

On the bridge, the amplified voice of a yoga instructor caught my ear. Down on the Race Street Pier, chiseled bodies performed synchronous asanas on multicolored mats arrayed like a rainbow keyboard. The moored battleship New Jersey appeared in the distance as a ghostly yacht of some legendary Camden king-pin. Were all those large, empty parking lots in Camden saying we lie next to the poorest city in America?

Looking up at the curving tubular suspension musculature of the bridge, I imagined Peter Rose doing his unauthorized 1990 [videoed walk](#) across the bridge on these suspension cables, a camera strapped to his back. Another walk, another time.

Treatman grounded us in facts, like 2/3 of the anchorages are under water and contributed to the deaths of fifteen workers during the early 1920s construction. And that glorious stone facing of the bridge that confronts opposite the FringeArts building was the work of the bridge's Beaux Arts modernist architect Paul Philippe Cret.

Was this performance, though, with the artist solely as tour guide?

Mira Treatman, Bridge to Somewhere, June 15, 21, 28, starting at 5th and Race Streets, www.miratreatman.com

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